



JOSEPH R. BIDEN, III
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
820 NORTH FRENCH STREET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19801

CONTACT JASON MILLER
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
PHONE (302) 577-8949
CELL (302) 893-8939
Jason.Miller@state.de.us

Media Release

October 25, 2011

Biden Urges Stronger Protections Against Fraudulent Charges on Telephone Bills

Delaware, 16 other states ask FCC for tougher federal rules fighting 'cramming'

WILMINGTON – Delaware Attorney General and his colleagues in 16 other states called on federal regulators this week to do more to protect consumers against unauthorized charges added to their telephone bills.

The Federal Communications Commission has proposed rules targeting a fraudulent scheme known as cramming – parties other than the telephone company deceiving customers and placing charges on phone bills without their consent. Cramming charges, which a recent U.S. Senate report estimates cost consumers more than \$2 billion annually, cover services such as e-mail and voicemail.

The proposed FCC rules are designed to give customers greater ability to guard against cramming. In a filing with the Commission this week, the Attorneys General asked the FCC to strengthen the proposed rules, especially those covering wireless phone users.

“Consumers should not have to be constantly defending themselves against schemes to sneak phony and fraudulent charges onto their phone bills,” Biden said. “We are asking the federal government to step up to protect consumers by cracking down on cramming.”

Specifically, the Attorneys General are asking the FCC to:

- Ban all third-party charges on landline bills or at least require that landline phone companies block all third-party charges unless the customer specifically agrees to allow such charges on his or her phone bill.
- Require wireless service providers to get approval from customers for every third-party charge that would be added to their bills, either via a phone call or text message; and
- Allow wireless customers to block all third-party charges from their bills.

“It is time that the Commission take decisive and effective action to put an end to unauthorized third-party charges on customer telephone bills,” the Attorneys General wrote in their FCC filing.

In addition to Delaware, the states participating in the filing with the FCC include Washington, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Maryland, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arizona, Nevada, Iowa, New Hampshire, Alaska, Georgia, New Mexico and Alabama.

###